

Karl Marx

1. *ad* Feuerbach

[Theses on Feuerbach]

Notebook from the years 1844-1847

Pp. /[51]/-/[55]/

Translated and edited
by Carlos Bendaña-Pedroza

Second revised edition
Bonn 2019

/[51]/

1

The capital defect of all materialism up to now (Feuerbach's included) is that the object (*Gegenstand*), the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), sensibility is grasped only under the form of the *object* (*Objekt*) or of intuition (*Anschauung*), but not as *sensibly human activity, practice*; not subjectively. Hence the active side developed abstractly, in opposition to materialism, from idealism — which naturally does not know actual, sensible activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensible objects — ones actually different from thought-objects: but he does not grasp human activity itself as *objective* activity. Hence in the “Essence of Christianity” he regards only theoretical activity as the authentically human one, while practice is grasped and fixed only in its dirtily Jewish appearance-form. Hence he does not conceive (*begreift*) the significance of “revolutionary,” of “practical-critical” activity.

The question whether objective truth can correspond (*zukomme*) to human thinking — is not a question of theory but a *practical* question. In practice man must prove the truth, i.e., the actuality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking. The dispute over the actuality or non-actuality of thinking — that is isolated from practice — is a purely *scholastic* question.

The materialistic doctrine of the transformation of circumstances and education, forgets that circumstances are transformed by men and that the educator himself must be educated. It must hence split society into two parts — of which one is lifted above it.

The coincidence of the transforming of circumstances and human activity or self-transformation can be only grasped and rationally understood as *revolutionary practice*.

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, of the duplication of the world into a religious and a worldly one. His work consists in dissolving the religious world into its worldly foundation. But that the worldly foundation lifts itself up from itself and fixes to itself a self-subsistent (*selbständig*) kingdom in the clouds can be only explained by the self-tearing (*Selbstzerrissenheit*) and self-contradicting (*Sichselbstwidersprechen*) of this worldly foundation. This itself must, therefore, in itself be both understood in its contradiction and practically revolutionized. Therefore, e.g., after the earthly family has been discovered as the secret of the holy family, the former must itself be theoretically and practically annihilated.

Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, wants

intuition; but he does not grasp sensibility as *practical*, human-sensible activity.

/[54]/

6

Feuerbach dissolves the religious essence into the *human* essence. But the human essence is not an abstraction dwelling in single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of the social relationships.

Feuerbach, who does not enter into the critique of this actual essence, is hence forced:

1. To abstract religious sentiment from the historical process and to fix it for itself, and to presuppose an abstract — *isolated* — human individual.

2. The essence can hence be grasped only as “genus,” as an inward, dumb generality which *naturally* binds the many individuals.

7

Feuerbach hence does not see that the “religious sentiment” itself is a social product, and that the abstract individual which he analyses belongs to a determinate form of society.

8

/[55]/

All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism, find their rational solution in human practice and in the conceiving (*Begreifen*) of this practice.

9

The highest point at which intuiting (*anschauende*) materialism arrives, i.e., materialism which does not conceive (*begreift*) sensibility as practical activity, is intuition of single individuals and of civil society.

10

The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society;

the standpoint of the new, human society or social humanity.

Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world differently, the point is to *transform* it.

Basis of the Translation

1. Text

Marx, Karl und Friedrich Engels. *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA). Sect. I, vol. 5. Berlin: Marx-Engels-Verlag 1932. Pp. 533-535.

Marx, Karl und Friedrich Engels. *Werke* (MEW). Vol. 3. Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1958. Pp. 5-7.

2. Reading

Bendaña-Pedroza, Carlos. *El manifiesto del método Ensayo de interpretación de las “Tesis sobre Feuerbach” de Karl Marx* [The Manifesto of Method. An Interpretative Essay on Karl Marx's “Theses on Feuerbach”]. Bonn, pdf. ed. 2015. https://www.academia.edu/11090475/EL_MANIFIESTO_DEL_ME_TODO_ENSAYO_DE_INTERPRETACION_DE_LAS_TESIS_SOBRE_FEUERBACH_DE_KARL_MARX.

Text of the MEW used by permission
of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation

PDF version by Martha Leonor Romero
Second revised pdf edition, Bonn, October 31, 2019
First pdf edition, Bonn, April 18, 2019

Copyright © Carlos Bendaña-Pedroza, 2019
All rights reserved
Bonn, Germany